

Health care is in need of reform. It costs too much, and not enough Americans receive it. The Republican alternative provides for that. The Democratic alternative does not.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

REASONS TO LEAVE AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Madam Speaker, this morning I was honored to go with five other Members, three Democrats and three Republicans, to have breakfast at the Pentagon with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. The Secretary is a kind man and this was a very nice thing for him to do. I have great respect for Secretary Gates.

The purpose of the breakfast was to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. When I got this invitation, I wondered if I should go, since I have been very much opposed to our war there. However, I decided that the only right and fair thing to do was to go listen to what he had to say.

Unfortunately, I still believe that what we are doing in Afghanistan is a horrendous waste that we cannot afford. I also believe that Afghanistan is no realistic threat to us, unless our war there continues to anger so many people around the world.

George C. Wilson, military columnist for Congress Daily, wrote recently: "The American military's mission to pacify the 40,000 tiny villages in Afghanistan will look like mission impossible, especially if our bombings keep killing Afghan civilians and infuriating the ones who survive."

General Petraeus said this summer we should not forget that Afghanistan has been known as the "graveyard of empires."

Congressional Quarterly reported on September 17 that members of both parties were "fretting openly about a lack of progress in the conflict."

As much as Americans love our troops, we need to realize that the Defense Department is not just a military organization. It is also the world's largest bureaucracy. Every gigantic bureaucracy always wants to expand its mission and frequently exaggerates its challenges so it can get more money and personnel.

The Taliban guerillas have almost no money, and a top U.N. antiterrorism official said recently that al Qaeda is having "difficulty in maintaining credibility."

National defense is the most legitimate function of our Federal Govern-

ment. However, that does not mean Congress should automatically or blindly approve the Pentagon's every request or never criticize its waste.

Much of what we are doing in Afghanistan is of a civic, charitable or governmental nature, like building schools and teaching agribusiness. But the Defense Department should not be the "Department of Foreign Aid," or much of our military primarily a very large version of the Peace Corps.

In March, the President promised a "dramatic increase" in our effort in Afghanistan, including "agricultural specialists and educators, engineers and lawyers." Why, when we are \$12 trillion in debt, are we spending mega-billions in Afghanistan doing practically everything for them? We are spending money we do not have on a very unnecessary war and jeopardizing our own future in the process.

Many people think that all conservatives support this war. Well, I believe that there are many millions of conservatives who do not and who want us to bring our troops home, the sooner the better. In fact, this war goes very much against traditional conservatism.

When I was in high school, I worked as a bag boy at an A&P grocery store making \$1.10 an hour. I sent my first paycheck, \$19 and some cents, as a contribution to the Barry Goldwater campaign. I am still one of the most conservative Members of Congress.

But this war has required huge deficit spending, almost half a trillion in war and war-related costs for Afghanistan. Fiscal conservatives should be the people most upset about this. This war has spent mega-billions in foreign aid, because probably at least half of what we have done and are doing there is of a civic or charitable nature. Traditional conservatives have been the strongest opponents of massive foreign aid.

□ 1845

We went into the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan under U.N. resolutions, yet conservatives have traditionally been the biggest critics of the U.N. Conservatives have traditionally been the biggest opponents of world government because it is too elitist and arrogant and too far removed from control by the people. We should not now support what is essentially world government just because it is being run by our military.

I am a veteran and I am very pro military, but I am for national defense, not international defense. I know that the leaders of Afghanistan want us to keep spending hundreds of billions there, but we cannot afford it. We cannot afford it economically, and as far as I am concerned, it is not worth one more American life.

I know that when leaders of the Defense Department and the State Department and the National Security Council all get together in their meetings, that all of the pressures are on getting involved or staying involved in

just about every military, political or ethnic dispute all around the world. I know that they want to be considered as great world statesmen, but 8 years in Afghanistan is not only enough, it is far too long. It is time, Madam Speaker, to come home. It is time to start putting our own people and our own country first once again.

FIGHTING FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN CUBA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, I had the privilege a few days ago to speak by telephone with one of the great heroes that fight for democracy and human rights in Cuba, Jorge Luis Garcia Perez, "Antunez." He is in the city of Placetas in Cuba. His house is surrounded by thugs of the dictatorship. He is continuously harassed, often detained, has spent 17 years as a political prisoner, and was recently released. Yet he continues his fight, peacefully, nonviolently, against the totalitarian system in Cuba, in that island that has been forgotten by the world, and yet its people continue to suffer under the yoke of a brutal, totalitarian, nightmarish regime led by a dictator who is infirm now, he is sick. By virtue of that, he has turned over some titles, titles of power to his brother, but yet he retains, Fidel Castro, retains absolute personal power, total power in that totalitarian fiefdom.

His brother receives visitors, heads of state and has some titles of power, but be not mistaken, the totalitarian power remains in the hands of Fidel Castro, who, for example, is the one that orders that heroes like Antunez be detained or released, that heroes such as Oscar Elias Biscet or Rolando Arroyo or Pedro Arguelles Moran or Normando Hernandez or Ariel Sigler Amaya or Librado Linares or Horacio Pina or Ricardo Gonzalez Alfonso or Hector Maceda or Felix Navarro or Rafael Ibarra and countless others be retained in the gulag being tortured simply because those heroes support the ability for the Cuban people to have the rights, for example, that the American people, or free people throughout the world have.

Jorge Luis Garcia Perez told me, when I spoke to him on the phone about the fact that his wife's brother, his wife is Iris Perez Aguilera, and she is also a fantastic, formidable freedom fighter. Her brother, Mario Perez Aguilera, is in the gulag being tortured, and is being denied access, visits by his family. In other words, Iris cannot visit her brother who is in horrible physical condition. We don't know how gravely ill, but we know he is very ill, and he is being denied access. His family cannot visit them.

So I told Antunez that I would come to this floor and use the great privilege